

2023 Advocacy Highlights

Early Learning Wins

◆ Working Connections Child Care (WCCC)

Child care subsidies must cover at least 85% of the cost of care, based on current market rates.

Allows for anyone, regardless of their immigration status, to apply for WWWC without their status being a factor in determining eligibility.

✦ Expansion for FFN Play & Learn Groups and Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants

▬ DCYF may grant a consumer experiencing homelessness a twelve-month grace period to submit their documentation.

Wins for Providers

◆ The Washington State Legislature increased the Non-Standard Hours Bonus (NSHB) to \$135 per month for providers

✦ Continuation of Equity Grants

Directs DCYF to distribute funds to support culturally and linguistically inclusive early learning and early childhood programs across the state.

▬ Continuation of Complex Needs Fund

Promotes inclusive, least restrictive environments and support providers serving children with developmental delays, disabilities, behavioral needs, or other unique needs.

● Eliminate Background Check Fees for Current and Future Providers

Removes licensing and background check fees for those entering Washington's child care workforce.



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2022-2023

Advocacy Program Impact Report



Advocacy is an important part of our mission and commitment to antiracism at BrightSpark, because it allows us to tackle the root causes of the injustices our communities face. We're committed to building space for conversation between community members, elected officials, and government agencies that shorten the distance between the policy that's being created and those living it.

One of the biggest injustices of our early learning system is how little the labor of child care is valued – a reality that is rooted in the legacy of slavery where Black women cared for white children as enslaved people, and later as domestic workers. Child care workers today are paid poverty wages despite significant education and experience. This is one of the biggest reasons why we are struggling to retain our diverse, culturally-relevant, and skilled child care workforce, and why many programs are having to close their doors.

In 2022, a team of child care providers developed a multi-year strategy to raise provider wages and provide dignified benefits and support. We are incredibly grateful to the diverse team of providers that have stepped up to be a part of this and tell advocates and governments what they need – not the other way around.

The early learning system we dream of is rooted in equity. It is a system that values each child and caregiver and allows for a diversity of care options that can support each child and family's unique needs and cultural identities. As a community, we have stepped up over the last few years and built some amazing momentum for early learning, AND we know that the needs our system is facing are more serious than ever. This moment requires that every level of government and every community partner to come to the table. Thank you to everyone in our community for engaging in advocacy, and we invite you to join us if you haven't yet. We are excited to see this community power grow!

Advocacy Pods

2023 marked the third year of our Advocacy Pods program. The Advocacy Pods were created as a way to create more accessible and powerful ways to advocate. They are built on the belief that the stronger the local relationships are amongst advocates and their elected officials on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis, the more powerful our advocacy will be on a larger geographic scale. Advocacy Pods bring together community members from across the early learning spectrum who all live in the same legislative district, including child care providers, parents, Family, Friend & Neighbor caregivers, BrightSpark staff and board members, and community partners. Each Pod meets with their elected officials to share the realities of what it's like to navigate finding, paying for, and offering care in their neighborhoods.

We know that any room that includes this diversity of voices and perspectives holds a wealth of knowledge, vision, and solutions. Some meetings are straight to the point, in others we share tears, and babies are always welcome on the screen. Ultimately they are a space for our community to share stories, hard truths, insights and concerns.

Advocacy Pod Fun Facts

- ◆ In the 2022-23 fiscal year, we met virtually and in-person with **48 elected state legislators** as well as sending delegates to Washington DC to meet with federal representatives.
- ☀ The BrightSpark Advocacy Pods include **24 pods** representing each of the legislative districts in King & Pierce Counties.
- ◐ As of 2023 we have **234 members**, with over 100 of them providers, family members, and external partners outside of BrightSpark staff.
- We aim to meet during nap time in the early afternoon so that child care providers can easily join as well as parents and other caregivers. Kids set the schedule!